

April 3, Aurora schools look to save on transportation

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In an effort to save on transportation costs, Aurora school districts 129 and 131 are in discussions to jointly bid out special education bus services.

Both districts outsource transportation for special education students who attend West Aurora or East Aurora high schools. Many of these students live relatively close to each other.

"In many cases they were going to the same place," District 129 Chief Financial Officer Kevin Wegner told school board members Monday.

Consolidating these routes would reduce spending between the two districts from \$6.3 million to \$4.9 million, a total of \$1.41 million in savings within the first year.

However Wegner points out the cost reduction also will reduce the amount the district is reimbursed by the state for transportation costs.

Without the additional reimbursement, Wegner estimates the district will save approximately \$121,000 by consolidating the routes, which he still considers a great savings.

"We think it's a model for districts to take out costs that do not impact the classroom," he said.

School boards from both districts may approve this joint action at their April 16 meetings.

The effort to reduce transportation costs is part of District 129's efficiency-effectiveness improvements. The district has saved more than \$1 million a year in salary and benefits in the past two years by eliminating 12 administrator positions and two central office positions.

"This is actually why education needs to be funded locally," school board member Scott Voris said. "Local people are resourceful, and that's where control should be for the funding."